

SRC Calendar:

Monday,
March 21

- **10 am:** Senate Gov Ops hearing on allowing local governments one more year to comply with GMA comprehensive plan requirements (ESHB 2171–Springer, SHR 2)
- **1:30 pm:** Senate Transportation work session on “Nontraditional transportation funding methods” (SHR 1)
- **1:30 pm:** House Commerce & Labor hearing on studying the minimum wage (SSB 5551–Hargrove, HHR C)
- **6 pm:** House Health Care and Children & Family Services hearing on treatment of mental and substance abuse disorders (E2SSB 5763–Hargrove, HHR A)

Tuesday,
March 22

- **10 am:** Senate Human Services & Corrections/ House Juvenile Justice & Family Law work session on the Becca Task Force (SHR 1–TVW)
- **11:30 am:** State employees rally (Capitol steps)
- **1:30 pm:** House Health Care hearing on public employee HSA option (2SSB 5202–Parlette, HHR A)
- **3:30 pm:** Senate Financial Institutions hearing on expanding jurisdiction of human rights commission (HB 1515–Murray, SHR 2–TVW)
- **6 pm:** Joint Senate and House Judiciary and Health Care hearing on health care liability reform (SB 6087/HB 2292: Brown/Cody, HHR A)

Wednesday,
March 23

- **Red Hat Day**
- **8 am:** Senate Ed hearing on simple majority for school levies (SHJR 4205–Shual-Burke, SHR 1)
- **8 am:** Senate Health Care hearing on prescription drug bills (SHR 4):
 - Purchasing consortium (SHB 1219–Cody)
 - Importation from Canadian wholesalers (2SHB 1316–Shual-Burke)
 - State regulation of Canadian pharmacies (2SHB 1168–Appleton)
 - Importation (HB 1194–Simpson)
- **10 am:** Senate Session/Caucus

Thursday,
March 24

- **1:30 pm:** Senate Transportation work session on I-5 Columbia River Bridge crossing (SHR 1–TVW)
- **3:30 pm:** Senate Health Care hearing on expanding state health care programs (SHR 4):
 - Expanding coverage to state health care programs (ESHB 2060–Cody)
 - Small business assistance program (E2SHB 2069–Morrell)

Friday,
March 25

- **10 am:** Senate Session/Caucus
- **Noon – 2 pm:** Motorcyclists Association rally (Capitol steps–est. attendance 500+)



Minimum Wage Study (SB 5551)

JOBSWATCH grade: A

Requires the Washington State Institute for Public Policy to study and identify the impact of the minimum wage on jobs and business climate. This will provide an opportunity for unbiased reporting on the impacts of Washington’s highest-in-the-nation minimum wage and annual increases. (Hargrove)

STATUS: The Senate approved SB 5551 by 47 votes to 2 votes on March 14. Referred to the House Commerce and Labor Committee on March 16.

Family Leave Tax (SB 5069/HB 1173)

JOBSWATCH grade: F

Imposes a 2-cent-per-hour tax that may be passed along to all employees to fund a new government program that pays people \$250 per week for up to five weeks of leave to care for new babies or sick loved ones. The measure has a variety of significant flaws: It takes money out of people’s paychecks regardless of whether their employer already provides paid leave; it is unfair to single people with no children; it doesn’t provide enough money to really help a person who needs the paid leave; and it requires those who want to take the leave to apply through the Department of Labor and Industries to get their money. (Keiser/Dickerson)

STATUS: The Senate approved SB 5069 by 26 votes to 21 votes on March 15 and has not yet been referred to a House committee. The House version of the bill was not voted from the House Appropriations Committee.

SRC in the News

- **Associated Press story in The News Tribune on I-601:** Democrats said the initiative has outlived its usefulness. Republicans said the changes clear the way for tax increases. “Welcome to Democrat control of the government,” **Sen. Don Benton**, R-Vancouver, announced on the Senate floor. “First thing they’re doing is destroying 601...an initiative the people put in place to protect themselves from an overzealous government.” **Sen. Joseph Zarelli**, R-Ridgefield and the ranking Republican on the Ways and Means Committee, said the bill would effectively exclude his party from tax discussions. The supermajority requirement “demands that new revenue suggestions be looked at from a purely nonpartisan perspective,” he said. “You can’t have a majority raising taxes without the discussions being had with the other side of the aisle. That’s good for all of us.” (*The News Tribune*, 3/16/05)